

Appln No. 09/575,171
Amdt. Dated January 30, 2004
Response to Office action of September 17, 2003

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REMARKS/ARGUMENTS

Claims

The Examiner rejected claims 1-81. By this amendment, claims 1, 8, 11, 33, 41, 43, 65, and 71 have been amended, and claims 7, 39, and 70 have been cancelled. Therefore claims 1-6, 8-38, 40-69, and 71-81 remain pending in the application.

Claim Rejections – 35 USC §103

Claims 7, 11, 39, 43, 70, and 71 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) as being unpatentable over Sekendur (USPN 5,852,434) in view of Patel (USPN 5,857,029) in view of Marshall (USPN 5,774,571) as applied to claims 1-6, 33-38 and 65-69, and further in view of Hilton (USPN 5,107,541). The rejection is respectfully traversed regarding claims 7, 39 and 70, the limitations of which have by this amendment been incorporated into all of the pending independent claims.

The Examiner cites Hilton as disclosing a “codeword” that the Examiner equates with the “signature key” of original claims 7, 39 and 70 and of currently amended claim 1. However as shown in Hilton at col. 9, lines 15-17, the “codeword” of Hilton is a handwritten password that is written by a user for example on a tablet outside an entrance. The “signature key” of currently amended claim 1 is not a handwritten password but is rather a private key that is already stored in a computer system, having been generated and placed there for example when a user first registers with the system. A general description of such a private key is provided in the present specification at page 49, line 25, to page 50, line 1: “Public-key cryptography can be used to create a digital signature. The holder of the private key can create a known hash of a message and then encrypt the hash using the private key. Anyone can then verify that the encrypted hash constitutes the ‘signature’ of the holder of the private key with respect to that particular message by decrypting the encrypted hash using the public key and verifying the hash against the message. If the signature is appended to the message, then the recipient of the message can verify both that the message is genuine and that it has not been altered in transit.”

According to currently amended claim 1, there is nothing in the “signature key” that relates directly to a handwritten signature. Rather, a handwritten signature is used only to authorize the computer system to use a user’s private signature key to generate a digital signature. That process is described in the specification at page 32, line 28, to page 33, line 6: “A signature field has an associated digital signature value 883, as shown in Figure 37. Any digital ink captured in a signature field’s zone is automatically verified with respect to the identity of the owner of the pen, and a digital signature of the content of the form of which the field is part is generated and assigned to the field’s value. The digital signature is generated using the pen user’s private signature key specific to the application which owns the form. Online signature verification is well-understood (see, for example, Plamondon, R. and G. Lorette, “Automatic Signature Verification and Writer Identification – The State of the Art”, Pattern Recognition, Vol.22, No.2, 1989, the contents of which are herein incorporated by cross-reference).”

Thus the limitations of original claim 7 that are by the current amendment incorporated into claim 1 are neither disclosed nor fairly suggested by the references cited by the Examiner. Those limitations have further been added to independent claims 33 and 65. The applicant thus asserts that all of the currently pending claims are novel and nonobvious in light of the prior art cited by the Examiner.

The applicant asserts that the other rejections under 35 U.S.C. 103 made by the Examiner are now moot in view of the current amendments to the independent claims.

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Conclusion

All of the independent claims have been amended to incorporate the limitations of original claim 7. Based on the arguments given above, the Examiner's rejection of original claim 7 under 35 U.S.C. 103 is respectfully traversed. Accordingly, it is submitted that the application is now in condition for allowance. Reconsideration and allowance of the application is courteously solicited.

Very respectfully,

Applicant:



KIA SILVERBROOK

Applicant:



PAUL LAPSTUN

C/o: Silverbrook Research Pty Ltd
393 Darling Street
Balmain NSW 2041, Australia

Email: kia.silverbrook@silverbrookresearch.com

Telephone: +612 9818 6633

Facsimile: +61 2 9555 7762